Judaism, environmentalism and the environment: Mapping and analysis
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Glossary

Aggadah – classical rabbinical texts which are non-legal in character
Asherah – a sacred tree (pole) dedicated to idolatry
Ashkenazi – the culture and liturgical rites of Jews who originated mainly in Germany and Eastern Europe
Bal tashhit – the Biblical commandment forbidding wanton destruction
Baraita – text originating in the Mishnah period, but not included in the Mishnah
Barmitzvah – the Jewish legal maturity of a boy at the age of 13
Bavli – the Babylonian Talmud, the edited discussions by the Babylonian sages on the Mishnah (from about 220–500)
Beit haMidrash – house of learning
Conservative Judaism – mid-19th century movement in Europe and USA, maintaining Hebrew as the liturgical language, kashrut, and Shabbat observance, but reluctantly accepting some other modern changes
Dat haAvoda – the religion of labor
Derekh Eretz – decency and decorum
Gemara – part of the Talmud; text which interprets the Mishnah
Halakha – the corpus of Jewish laws which regulate the life of the observant Jew
Halakhot – Jewish laws
Hamez – leavened bread, forbidden during the festival of Pesach
Hasidism – a movement founded in Poland around 1730 by Israel Ba’al Shem-Tov. Its adherents (hasidim) focused on discovering the true service of God through religious enthusiasm.
Havurah – community
Heder – Jewish elementary school
Hora’at Sh’ab’ah – the temporary suspension of the Jewish law for emergency purposes
Hoshana Rabbah – the last day of the Sukkot festival
Hukkim – a category of God-given law which was unlikely to have been developed by the community for rational reasons
Kabbalah – Jewish mysticism
Kabbalist – a person who believes in and studies the Kabbalah
Kashrut – Jewish dietary laws
Kav – a measure equal to 24 eggs
Kavod haBeriyot – respect for the dead
Kibbutz – a collective settlement in Israel
Kiddush – ritual blessing over wine on Shabbat and holidays
Kilayim – the forbidden mixing of certain species
Korban – sacrifice
Manna – a non-meat food, provided by God in the Israelites’ 40 years of wandering in the desert
Midrash – a method of rabbinic explanation of Bible texts, also used for a collection of such interpretations
Minhagim – religious customs
Mishnah – the collection of oral teachings, edited by R. Yehuda the Prince, around the year 200
Mishne Torah (the repetition of the Torah) – codex summarizing the entire Jewish Law up to the 12th century, by Maimonides
Mishpatim – a category of God-given law which, for its benefit, civil society would have instituted on a rational basis even if they were not of Divine origin
Mitnaggedim – ‘opponents’; a movement which opposes Hasidism
Mitzvah (mitzvot) – religious commandment(s)
Nazirite – a person who vows to consecrate himself to God for a certain period of time
Noachide laws – laws in the Torah valid for all humanity. These prohibit idolatry, the vain use of God’s name, murder, sexual transgressions, theft and eating the flesh of live animals
Pesach – the holiday of ‘Passover’, celebrating the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt
Peshat – the plain meaning of a text
Pikku’ah Nefesh (literally: watching one’s soul) – the rule that one should transgress the observance of Halakhot rather than die (the only exceptions to this being murder, incest and idolatry)
Pirkei Avot – a tractate from the Mishnah which contains ethical teachings
Reconstructionism – a Jewish religious movement, mainly active in the United States, where it was founded by Mordecai M. Kaplan in 1922. It sees the survival of the Jewish people as a central value, rather than religious beliefs or rituals. As far as the latter is concerned, each individual should consider which ones he wishes to practice. It does not believe that the Torah is Divine revelation to Moses.
Reform Judaism – also known as ‘Liberal’ or ‘Progressive’ Judaism; originated in Germany in the 19th century; varies from place to place, but the communities share the assertion of the legitimacy
of change in Judaism, and the denial of eternal validity to any given formulation of Jewish belief or codification of Jewish law

Responsum (Responsa) – Jews who required halakhic decisions referred their questions to Jewish scholars. Their answers, known as the Responsa literature, extend Jewish law further

Rosh haShanah – the Jewish New Year, which occurs in the autumn

Sefer haHinukh – an explanation of the Biblical commandments, written by Rabbi Aaron Halevi of Barcelona around 1300

Sephardi – the culture and liturgical rites of Eastern or Oriental Jews

Shabbat – the seventh day of the week; the Sabbath

Shehitah – Jewish ritual slaughter

Shema – central prayer of both the morning and evening services

Shemittah – the commandment to let the fields rest for a year, and not to use any products that they may produce during that time

Shilhu‘ah haKen – the commandment to send away a mother bird who is sitting on fledglings or eggs, before taking them

Shomrei Adamah (literally: Guards of the Earth) – a Jewish environmentalist group in the United States

Shulhan Arukh (the set table) – codex of Halakha compiled by Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century) in Palestine

Sifrei – one of the oldest collections of rabbinical traditions

Sukkah – a hut in which one lives or eats temporarily during the festival of Sukkot

Sukkot – the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles which falls in September or October

Takkana (takkanot) (literally: enactment) – decisions taken by rabbinical authorities in the public interest

Talmud – a book which contains the oral law in writing, and the rabbinic discussion of its interpretation. It consists of Mishnah and Gemara. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian (Bavli) and the Jerusalemite (Yerushalmi) or Palestinian

Tashlikh – a ceremony taking place on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh haShanah in which one’s sins are symbolically cast into a body of running water

Torah – the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses

Tu bi-Shevat – a one-day minor festival, the new year of the trees, usually falling in January or February

Yishuv ha-Aretz, Yishuv ha-Olam – settling the land or earth

Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement, a solemn day of prayer and fasting, which falls in September or October

Yom tov – a festival or holy day

Yovel – jubilee, every 50th year
Za'ar Ba'alei Hayyim – the commandment to avoid unnecessary suffering to animals

Zaddik – a righteous person; in the Hasidic movement the zaddik is a spiritual and moral leader

Zohar – the Book of Splendor; the central work of Jewish mysticism, usually attributed to the sage Shimon bar Yochai but supposed to have been written by Moses de Leon in Spain at the end of the 13th century